

9 June 1977

SUBJECT: An Order of Magnitude Improvement in Intelligence

This memo addresses two questions: (1) Why the products of the Community -- and in particular the CIA -- are shallower, more often wrong, much less relevant than consumers need and can reasonably expect, and (2) What a determined Director might do to achieve an order of magnitude improvement in the quality of estimates and analyses used in policy-making.

I. THE SHAPE OF THE PROBLEM

For over a decade, careful reviews of the intelligence Community's performance have been unanimous: The U.S. government is not being well served by present capabilities and procedures.

-- Repeatedly, Presidents, Secretaries of State, Defense and Treasury, and their associates have not understood why foreign governments were taking certain actions, have acted on the basis of poor bets about the actions of potential enemies or allies, and have formulated actions aimed at one objective that in fact produced counter-productive reactions from foreign governments.

-- Repeatedly, new appointees have been shocked to find that the level of understanding embodied in intelligence products (for example, on issues like Brazil's interest in nuclear weapons) is not substantially deeper than what is available in the open literature.

-- Repeatedly, reviews of the Community's current intelligence reporting have found that it is not significantly better than the best available current newspaper reporting (for example, certain German and Swiss papers reporting of Yugoslavia, vs. the Community).

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